

# Guided Reading Within a Balanced Literacy Program

*When teachers, librarians, and parents concentrate on plans to foster a love of reading in each child, communities become caring, literate places to live.* CHARLOTTE HUCK

**G**uided reading is only one component of a balanced literacy program. A child might spend between ten to thirty minutes a day in a focused reading group that is organized, structured, planned, and supported by the teacher. During the rest of the day, that same student will participate in whole-group, small-group, and individual activities related to a wide range of reading and writing, almost all of which involve children of varying experience and abilities.

## ***A Framework for Literacy Learning***

A flexible framework is useful in conceptualizing the curriculum for teaching literacy in the primary grades. It is a way of thinking about the range of reading and writing activities that are essential for promoting early literacy; it also guides teachers in integrating instructional processes and the content of math, literature, science, and other areas.

The framework presented here is useful throughout the first three or four grades of school, and the concepts may be adapted even for older children. In its present form (see Figure 3-1) it has eight instructional components and emphasizes oral language across the curriculum, working with letters

and words, the unifying aspect of integrated themes, observation, assessment, and the role of a home-school partnership. Flexibility is the key to implementing this literacy framework. *It is important to recognize that components are not separate elements but are linked together in two powerful ways: (1) through the oral language that surrounds, supports, and extends all activities and (2) by the content or topic of focus.*

## **Oral language across the curriculum**

Oral language is the foundation of the primary curriculum. Throughout the day, children explore concepts and construct meaning by talking among themselves and with the teacher. As discussed in Chapter 2, language is a powerful system that children bring with them to their first school experiences. In both whole- and small-group activities, teachers encourage children to offer their ideas and comments. A basic assumption is that classroom talk for both teacher and children should have the quality of conversation, including:

- Making statements and asking questions.
- Elaborating and explaining.
- Listening.
- Responding.
- Expanding others' ideas.

## The Ohio State University Early Literacy Learning Initiative

The framework for early literacy lessons was developed by surveying the research and descriptive literature, examining research on language and literacy learning, and involving classroom teachers and Reading Recovery teachers in action research since 1984. The framework outlined below is a flexible organizational tool for classroom and reading teachers who want to engage children in a variety of literacy experiences and refine their teaching. The value of each component depends on the organization and the effectiveness of teaching within it. In each component, teachers observe children's responses carefully and draw their attention to powerful examples that illustrate critical processes.

Element	Values	Supportive Research & Descriptive Literature
<b>1. Reading Aloud</b> The teacher reads aloud to the whole class or small groups. A carefully selected body of children's literature is used; the collection contains a variety of genres and represents our diverse society. Favorite texts, selected for special features, are reread many times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involves children in reading for enjoyment</li> <li>• Demonstrates reading for a purpose</li> <li>• Provides an adult demonstration of phrased, fluent reading</li> <li>• Develops a sense of story</li> <li>• Develops knowledge of written language syntax</li> <li>• Develops knowledge of how texts are structured</li> <li>• Increases vocabulary</li> <li>• Expands linguistic repertoire</li> <li>• Supports intertextual ties</li> <li>• Creates community of readers through enjoyment and shared knowledge</li> <li>• Makes complex ideas available to children</li> <li>• Promotes oral language development</li> <li>• Establishes known texts to use as a basis for writing and other activities through rereading</li> </ul>	Adams (1990) Clark (1976) Cochran-Smith (1984) Cohen (1968) Durkin (1966) Goodman, Y. (1984) Green & Harker (1982) Hiebert (1988) Huck, Hickman, Hepler (1993) Ninio (1980) Pappas & Brown (1987) Schickedanz (1978) Wells (1985)
<b>2. Shared Reading</b> Using an enlarged text that all children can see, the teacher involves children in reading together following a pointer. The process includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rereading big books, poems, songs</li> <li>• Rereading retellings</li> <li>• Rereading alternative texts</li> <li>• Rereading the products of interactive writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicitly demonstrates early strategies, such as word-by-word matching</li> <li>• Builds sense of story and ability to predict</li> <li>• Demonstrates the processes of reading extended text</li> <li>• Like reading aloud, involves children in an enjoyable and purposeful way</li> <li>• Provides social support from the group</li> <li>• Provides opportunity to participate and behave like a reader</li> <li>• Creates body of known texts that children can use for independent reading and as resources for writing and word study</li> </ul>	Holdaway (1979) Martinez & Roser (1985) Pappas & Brown (1987) Rowe (1987) Snow (1983) Sulzby (1985) Teale & Sulzby (1986)
<b>3. Guided Reading</b> The teacher works with a small group who have similar reading processes. The teacher selects and introduces new books and supports children reading the whole text to themselves, making teaching points during and after the reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides the opportunity to read many texts and a wide variety of texts</li> <li>• Provides opportunity to problem-solve while reading for meaning ("reading work")</li> <li>• Provides opportunity to use strategies on extended text</li> <li>• Challenges the reader and creates context for successful processing on novel texts</li> <li>• Provides opportunity to attend to words in text</li> <li>• Teacher selection of text, guidance, demonstration, and explanation is available to the reader</li> </ul>	Clay (1991a & 1991b) Fountas & Pinnell (1996) Holdaway (1979) Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord (1993) McKenzie (1986) Meek (1988) Routman (1991) Wong, Groth, & O'Flahavan (1994)

FIGURE 3-1 The Ohio State University early literacy learning initiative

Element	Values	Supportive Research & Descriptive Literature
<b>4. Independent Reading</b> Children read on their own or with partners from a wide range of materials. Some reading is from a special collection at their reading level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides opportunity to apply reading strategies independently</li> <li>• Provides time to sustain reading behavior</li> <li>• Challenges the reader to work on his/her own and to use strategies on a variety of texts</li> <li>• Challenges the reader to solve words independently while reading texts well within his/her control</li> <li>• Promotes fluency through rereading</li> <li>• Builds confidence through sustained, successful reading</li> <li>• Provides the opportunity for children to support each other while reading</li> </ul>	Clay (1991a) Holdaway (1979) McKenzie (1986) Meek (1988) Taylor (1993)
<b>5. Shared Writing</b> Teacher and children work together to compose messages and stories; teacher supports process as scribe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates how writing works</li> <li>• Provides opportunities to draw attention to letters, words, and sounds</li> <li>• Enables children's ideas to be recorded</li> <li>• Creates written language resources for the classroom</li> </ul>	Goodman, Y. (1984) Holdaway (1979) McKenzie (1986) Sulzby (1985)
<b>6. Interactive Writing</b> As in shared writing, teacher and children compose messages and stories that are written using a "shared pen" technique that involves children in the writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates concepts of print, early strategies, and how words work</li> <li>• Provides opportunities to hear sounds in words and connect with letters</li> <li>• Helps children understand "building up" and "breaking down" processes in reading and writing</li> <li>• Provides opportunities to plan and construct texts</li> <li>• Increases spelling knowledge</li> <li>• Provides texts that children can read independently</li> <li>• Provides written language resources in the classroom</li> </ul>	Button, Johnson, & Furgerson (1996) McCarrier & Patacca (1994) Pinnell & McCarrier (1994)
<b>7. Guided Writing or Writing Workshop</b> Children engage in writing a variety of texts. Teacher guides the process and provides instruction through minilessons and conferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps writers develop their voice</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for children to learn to be writers</li> <li>• Provides chance to use writing for different purposes across the curriculum</li> <li>• Increases writers' abilities to use different forms</li> <li>• Builds ability to write words and use punctuation</li> <li>• Fosters creativity and the ability to compose</li> </ul>	Atwell (1987) Britton (1983) Calkins (1983; 1986) Giacobbe (1981) Graves (1983) Graves & Hansen (1983)
<b>8. Independent Writing</b> Children write their own pieces, including (in addition to stories and informational pieces) retellings, labeling, speech balloons, lists, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides opportunity for the independent production of written text</li> <li>• Provides chance to use writing for different purposes across the curriculum</li> <li>• Increases writers' abilities to use different forms</li> <li>• Builds ability to write words and use punctuation</li> <li>• Fosters creativity and the ability to compose</li> </ul>	Bissex (1980) Clay (1975) Dyson (1982) Ferreiro & Teberosky (1982) Goodman, Y. (1984) Harste, Woodward, & Burke (1984)

FIGURE 3-1 continued

Special Attention to Letters and Words and How They Work	Values	Supporting Research
Woven through the activities in the framework teachers have opportunities to help children notice and use letters and words; knowledge is further fostered through the use of alphabet centers and word walls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps children become familiar with letter forms</li> <li>• Helps children learn to use visual aspects of print</li> <li>• Provides opportunities to notice and use letters and words that are embedded in text</li> <li>• Provides opportunities to manipulate letters and make words</li> <li>• Provides a growing inventory of known letters and words</li> <li>• Helps children link sounds with letters and letter clusters</li> <li>• Helps children use what they know about words to solve new words</li> </ul>	<p>Adams (1990) Cunningham (1995) Read (1970; 1975) Schickedanz (1986)</p>
<b>Achieving Coherence Through Extensions and Themes</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elements of the framework are integrated through the content of the curriculum. Teachers extend stories and link them together through art, drama, music, experiments, and mathematics activities. For example, children might make story maps, create a restaurant for daily dramatic play, make innovations on texts, plan their work with lists, write observations of change in nature, compare several versions of a text, engage in an in-depth study on a particular subject, or take surveys and analyze the results. Literature is an integral part of the process.</li> <li>• Provides opportunities to interpret texts in different ways</li> <li>• Provides a way of revisiting a story</li> <li>• Fosters collaboration and enjoyment</li> <li>• Creates a community of readers</li> <li>• Provides efficient instruction through integration of content areas</li> <li>• Enables children to express and extend their understanding using the processes of various disciplines</li> </ul>		
<b>Documenting Children's Progress</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers systematically gather observational data over time to document the progress of individual children. Some formal assessments are used; data are aggregated to assess overall effects of the program.</li> <li>• Provides information to guide daily teaching</li> <li>• Provides a way to track the progress of individual children</li> <li>• Provides a basis for reporting to parents</li> <li>• Helps a school staff to assess the effectiveness of the instructional program</li> <li>• Provides children with evidence of their growth</li> </ul>		
<b>Home and Community Involvement</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents participate in the school curriculum through receiving information, being welcomed in the school, participating in book making workshops, and receiving Keep Books for children to read at home.</li> <li>• Brings reading and writing materials and new learning into children's homes</li> <li>• Gives children more opportunities to show their families what they are learning</li> <li>• Increases reading and writing opportunities for children</li> <li>• Demonstrates value and respect for children's homes</li> </ul>		

FIGURE 3-1 *continued*

- Taking turns.
- Thinking about and respecting alternative meanings.
- Repeating and restating ideas.
- Using language to investigate and wonder.
- Enjoying and sharing the play of language through poetry, rhyme, and humor.

In every component of the framework, children use language to learn and teachers use language to extend children's language and demonstrate new ways of using it. Reading aloud provides new models and meaning that can be applied in group and independent writing. Composing written text from a rich oral backdrop is demonstrated through interactive writing. In guided reading, teachers frame the selection orally before reading; ongoing conversation directs children's attention to examples that will move them forward. In literature circles, children learn how to listen to and extend each other's understanding. Writing workshop or guided writing provides a context for using oral language to support specific writing strategies and skills. In independent reading and writing and in center activities, children's conversations with each other support the process. With a balanced literacy approach, the classroom is orderly and quiet enough to work without distraction, but it is by no means silent. Oral language is the constant vehicle and support for learning.

### Integrated themes

The talk varies as children focus on a topic of interest such as butterflies, folktales, or friendship. Integrated themes serve a larger purpose by creating an overarching web of meaning that helps children connect the various reading and writing activities in a purposeful way. Not all components of the framework are required to be part of an integrated theme. For example, guided reading is seldom connected to a theme. But where connections are possible, implementing a theme adds interest to the curriculum and helps children create meaning across reading and writing.

A piece of literature is sometimes the

impetus for thematic learning that reaches across the curriculum. For example, *Peanut Butter and Jelly*, by Nadine Bernard Westcott, was the source of some limited but authentic connections in Ida Patacca's kindergarten class. Children enjoyed hearing their teacher read this fanciful rhyming song and joined in. They created a shopping list and made their own peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, an activity that involved mathematical reasoning as well as many aspects of literacy. A broader theme was sparked by reading several versions of *The Three Little Pigs*. Children compared versions, dramatized and wrote their own adaptation of the story, created a story map, and read it several times. They explored facts about real pigs and wrote an informational big book. Purposeful reading and writing permeated the thematic study.

### Elements of the framework

The elements are not fixed and separate, and activity in the classroom moves smoothly around them. However, discussing them separately is a tool for planning how to use them. Each element requires a different level of support from the teacher and respects the level of control or independence of the children (see Figure 3-2). For example, the teacher is in full control of reading aloud, although the children are actually listening, commenting, and joining in on familiar parts. In shared reading the child shares the control with the teacher. In guided reading, the child is mostly in control, but the teacher provides a small amount of support. In independent reading, the child is in full control of the process, with little or no teacher support. The same applies to the different contexts for writing.

Figures 3-2, 3-3, and 3-4 summarize the four kinds of reading and writing, the level of support provided by the teacher, and the materials used.

### Reading aloud

Reading aloud is the foundation of the early literacy framework. By being immersed in a

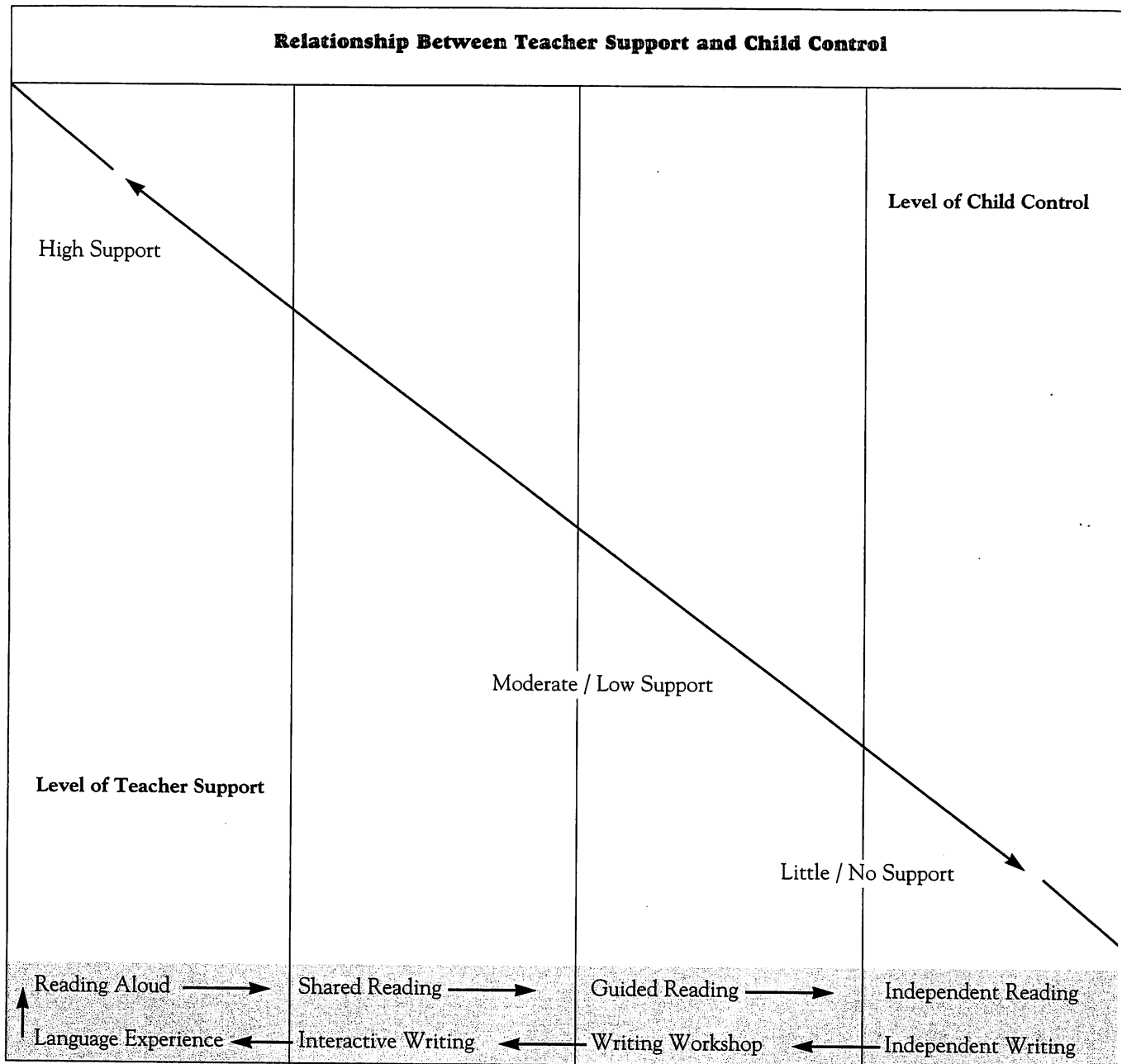


FIGURE 3-2 Relationship between teacher support and child control

variety of well-chosen texts children not only learn to love stories and reading but they also learn about written language. Teachers in kindergarten and first and second grade often read the same story—a favorite that is rich in language opportunities—many times. Children assimilate a sense of the structure of written language and can produce it in a way that sounds like reading and approximates text. Just as

important, they learn how texts are put together—how stories work or how you look for the information in expository texts. They build up a repertoire of text structures and literary language structures that will support them in their independent reading.

Reading aloud begins the first day of school and continues throughout a child's school career. From hearing a text read,

### Four Kinds of Reading / Four Levels of Support

Four Kinds of Reading	Levels of Support	Materials
<b>Reading Aloud</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher selects and reads a book or other text to the children. Texts rich in meaning or language and class favorites are read again and again, and are used as a base for other activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher provides full support for children to access the text.</li> <li>Children respond to pictures, meaning, and language.</li> <li>They may join in but usually do not focus on features of print.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual book for teacher.</li> </ul>
<b>Shared Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher introduces and reads an enlarged text or a small text of which each child has a copy. On refrains and in multiple readings, children join in, reading in unison.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher provides high level of support.</li> <li>There is some group problem solving and a lot of conversation about the meaning of the story.</li> <li>Readers support each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large-print charts.</li> <li>Big books.</li> <li>Individual copies.</li> <li>Easel.</li> <li>Pointers.</li> </ul>
<b>Guided Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher selects and introduces a new text.</li> <li>Children read the whole text to themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some teacher support is needed.</li> <li>Reader problem-solves a new text in a way that is mostly independent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual books.</li> <li>Easel and chart paper.</li> </ul>
<b>Independent Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children read to themselves or with partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little or no teacher support is needed.</li> <li>The reader independently solves problems while reading for meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Big and little books.</li> <li>Large-print charts.</li> <li>Writing displayed in the room.</li> <li>Classroom library.</li> <li>Pointers.</li> </ul>

FIGURE 3-3 Four kinds of reading/four levels of support

older children develop in-depth knowledge of characterization and complex plots. Reading aloud makes available rich content so that children can analyze texts and compare them. It allows the teacher to demonstrate ways to make personal connections and comparisons with books that children use for interactions in literature circles and forms a foundation for other reading and writing activities.

#### Shared reading

In shared reading, students join the teacher to read aloud in unison from an enlarged text—a

big book, a poem, or any enlarged message or story. Texts enlarged on an overhead projector can also be used. The children must be able to see the print clearly so they can engage in the group reading process.

During the reading, the teacher or another student guides the readers by pointing to (or sliding below) each word of the text with a dowel rod or other long slender object. The technique was originally developed in New Zealand (Holdaway 1979) as a way to involve young children intensively in a story while inviting them to attend to print. As in the lap story, the text is initially read

### Four Kinds of Writing / Four Levels of Support

Four Kinds of Writing	Levels of Support	Materials
<b>Shared Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher guides children to compose messages and acts as their scribe. The message is reread many times.</li> <li>Teachers may use a combination of writing for children and interactive writing, being aware of time and pacing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher provides full support.</li> <li>The teacher models and demonstrates the process of putting children's ideas into written language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large charts and markers.</li> <li>Materials for making big books.</li> <li>Individual slates (optional).</li> <li>Magnadoodle or slate for the teacher.</li> <li>White tape for making corrections.</li> <li>Pointer for rereading.</li> <li>Letter chart or letters for use as a model for formation.</li> </ul>
<b>Interactive Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher guides group writing of a large-print piece, which can be a list, a chart, pages of a book, or another form of writing.</li> <li>All children participate in composing and constructing various aspects of the writing.</li> <li>The piece of writing is read many times by the group during the process and as shared reading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a high level of teacher support.</li> <li>The teacher models and demonstrates writing processes but also involves individual children.</li> <li>The teacher selects letters, words, or other writing actions for individual children to do; the pen or marker is shared.</li> <li>The message or story is composed by the group and then constructed word by word.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large charts and markers.</li> <li>Materials for making big books.</li> <li>Individual slates (optional).</li> <li>Magnadoodle or slate for the teacher.</li> <li>White tape for making corrections.</li> <li>Pointer for rereading.</li> <li>Letter chart or letters for use as a model for formation.</li> </ul>
<b>Guided Writing or Writing Workshop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher has individual conferences with writers, giving selected feedback.</li> <li>The teacher may work with the whole class or a small group to provide general guidance and mini-lessons on any aspect of writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some teacher support is needed.</li> <li>Children generally select their own topics and pieces but the teacher sets the scene and gives specific guidance and/or feedback as needed.</li> <li>Children solve their own problems in writing with teacher assistance and/or feedback.</li> <li>The teacher provides specific instruction in minilessons and conferences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Word wall, dictionaries, or other resources.</li> <li>Paper, pencils, markers, staples, pre-made plain books, and art materials.</li> <li>Print-rich environment as a resource</li> </ul>
<b>Independent Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children write their own messages and stories, sometimes helping each other.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little or no teacher support is needed.</li> <li>The reader independently composes and writes, using known words and constructing the spelling of unknown words.</li> <li>Children know how to use the resources in the room to get to words they cannot write independently.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper, pencils, markers, staples pre-made plain books, and art materials</li> <li>Resources children use on their own such as the word wall or dictionary</li> <li>Print-rich environment as a resource</li> </ul>

FIGURE 3-4 Four kinds of writing/four levels of support



by the teacher but the print is large enough that children can attend to it in incidental ways. Unlike home reading, however, teachers deliberately draw attention to the print and model early reading behaviors such as moving from left to right and word-by-word matching. Many texts used for shared reading in the early stages have a repeating refrain or rhyme to increase the enjoyment of reading them over and over.

Designed to be used with the whole class or a small group, this activity provides many opportunities for incidental learning about the way written language works. The context created by shared reading is totally supportive of young readers as they begin to attend to the details of print while still focusing on meaning and enjoyment. Shared reading:

- Builds on previous experiences with books.
- Provides language models.
- Expands vocabulary.
- Lays a foundation for guided and independent reading.
- Supports children who are on the verge of reading so that they can enjoy participating in reading whole stories.
- Provides an opportunity for the teacher to demonstrate phrased, fluent reading and to draw attention to critical concepts about print.
- Provides a context for learning specific words and features of words.
- Helps children become familiar with texts that they can use independently as resources for writing and reading.

Shared reading is highly complementary to the instructional goals of guided reading. It begins very early in the kindergarten year before children can read even a little. In shared reading, emerging readers get a chance to behave like readers and learn the

process. After children begin participating in guided reading groups, however, shared reading does not stop. Many of the strategies needed for independent reading of a text can be taught during shared reading, especially when it is used with a small group rather than the whole class. For example, after several readings, when children are familiar with the text, the teacher can draw children's attention to various aspects of the text, such as letter-sound relationships, visual information, predicting and checking, or using illustrations. He can cover up a word with a Post-it, for example, letting children predict the word and the first letter, and then uncover the word to confirm.

The approach can be varied by giving children small copies of the book and letting them follow along, reading their own copies. Books made through interactive writing can be reproduced in small sizes and photocopied so that everyone can take home a copy. Children can also do shared reading on their own (in small groups or with partners). Observation of children's use of reading strategies in one setting, shared or guided, informs the teaching decisions in the other.

Although there is some overlap, book selection is generally different for shared and guided reading. (Books introduced in both settings may be used for independent reading.) For shared reading, teachers can use a commercial big book, or a book, story map, or chart that the children have produced through interactive writing. Books children write in groups have many advantages. Children have attended closely to the print while producing the writing, and they have a strong feeling of ownership for the text. They go back again and again to the books they have made together.

The book selected should be one that children enjoy and will request again. Children's responses will indicate whether a particular book is a good choice. The print must be clearly seen by all children in the group, even those in the back. Some books may be appropriate for shared reading with a small

group; others may have print that can be seen by a large group. Some books may have a refrain; the structure of repetitive texts helps children readily join in and supports their ability to use language pattern and syntax. Books with rhyme help children build an internal sense of the sounds of language.

A big book should have just a few lines of print on each page. For children just beginning to engage with print, one line on a page, with clearly defined spaces between words, is best. It is difficult for children to follow a text with many lines of print. The print should be clear and readable and there should be an easy-to-see but not exaggerated space between words.

Aside from the literacy learning involved, another value of shared reading is the role it can play in creating a community of readers who enjoy participating together in literacy events. Later on in school, shared reading becomes choral reading and readers theater. Over time the nature of the activity shifts and changes, but the shared experience still has much value.

### ***Guided reading***

Guided reading places the child in a more formal instructional reading situation. In kindergarten there is a smooth transition from shared to guided reading as children reveal that they are on the verge of reading. Teachers make the decision to move some children into guided reading by observing children's behaviors as they explore books independently and participate in shared reading. After hearing books read aloud, many children will begin to try to figure them out for themselves. Approximations come closer and closer to the actual text and they notice particular words or details of print. Shared reading demonstrates word-by-word matching, and children will begin to emulate this behavior as they read very simple books with natural language and only one or two lines of text per page.

In first grade, guided reading is a foundation of the literacy curriculum. To sustain

forward progress, children need to take part in a guided reading group between three and five days per week in the early stages, reading a new book just about every time the group meets. Beginning books are relatively short (between eight and sixteen pages) so it is possible to build a large collection of books that children have read before, which can be placed in "browsing boxes" for independent reading. As children grow in their ability to read longer and more difficult texts, they may have to spend more than one day on a selection. There will also be shifts over time in the focus of guided reading. Throughout the grades guided reading takes on a variety of other purposes and forms: analyzing texts for character development and structure, comparing texts by theme, learning to read a variety of genres, or learning how to get information from texts.

Collections of books—leveled according to their support and challenge—are often shared by kindergarten and first- and second-grade teachers; collections may also be developed for intermediate teachers to share. Children do not read the same sequence of books; there are enough selections to meet the needs and interests of all. At all grade levels, teachers use dynamic, flexible, grouping rather than fixed reading groups.

### ***Independent reading***

Independent reading involves children not only in reading books but in using all the written materials in the classroom. A favorite activity is to "read the room," which means walking around with a pointer and reading everything that is displayed on the walls or on hanging charts. Poems, songs, pieces composed through interactive and shared writing, and big books are all grist for the mill.

Reading and rereading familiar texts has been shown to support young children's learning to read. Every child in every classroom, every day, deserves the chance to behave like and enjoy the pleasure of being a good reader. Achieving this goal requires us as

teachers to be superb choosers of books for children and eventually to teach them to choose books for themselves. It also requires a large classroom library as well as well-stocked school libraries. Possibilities for independent reading are displayed in the chart shown in Figure 3–5, which is by no means exhaustive.

### **Further reading experiences**

There are also other important structures or contexts that extend readers. Children need many opportunities to discuss books they have read or may not yet be able to read.

*Literature circles.* Literature circles are a means for more intensive talking or thinking

about books, or “book talk.” When children share their personal responses and interpretations of a book with one another, they are able to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their world.

Book talks or literature circles can follow a read-aloud, as the children respond to story elements such as character, setting, plot, language, or illustrations. As partners, as a small group, or as a class, the children can make connections between one book and another, compare works by an author or illustrator, contrast versions of a story, or relate a story to their own lives. These same contemplations of a text can follow shared

### **Possibilities for Independent Reading**

#### **Location In Classroom**

#### **Variety of Texts to Read**

##### **Walls**

- name chart
- nursery rhymes on large charts
- alphabet charts
- number charts
- songs (e.g., “Happy Birthday to You”)
- labels or lists
- posters
- helpers chart and other management charts with names
- word wall
- interactive writing: story retellings, story maps with labels, alternative texts
- poster or poem charts
- pocket charts

##### **Centers**

- directions
- menus or recipes (restaurant or house corner)
- reference materials: encyclopedias, dictionaries, thesauruses
- informational books
- manuals
- reference charts, diagrams, maps

##### **Classroom Library**

- big books
- baskets of books sorted by author, illustrator, theme, series or other genres
- books arranged by level
- browsing boxes
- poem box
- class-published books
- paperbacks (novels)

FIGURE 3–5 Possibilities for independent reading

reading of a poem or story, listening to a story at the listening center, or guided reading of a book with many layers of meaning.

A common approach to literature circles is for partners or clusters of students to talk about their books. They may discuss the same title or different books they have read on a theme, by an author or illustrator, or of a particular genre. The teacher sets up a system for choosing books and schedules time for the students to meet. Partners or groups read their books, often noting parts they want to discuss, and gather to talk about them. This intensive, open-ended literature discussion provides the richness of literature experiences to all students regardless of current instructional reading level.

*Reading workshop.* The goal of any reading program is a child's ability to select, read independently, and think deeply about books. Reading workshop is similar to writing workshop: the teacher presents a short, focused lesson to support the effective use of reading strategies or to promote and broaden students' knowledge about books. Children generally choose their own books, confer with peers or the teacher, and share their reading with the group (there may be a designated reader's chair, for example). This structure is very powerful in developing readers who love books and who can choose, read, and discuss books in authentic ways.

### **Shared writing**

For many years, language experience has been a useful technique in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. Essentially, the teacher invites a child or group of children to compose aloud a written message. The message is usually related to some individual or group experience. The children talk and the teacher acts as scribe. The children are able to turn their ideas into written language, and the teacher can demonstrate the writing process. The stories are much richer than children can write themselves and are good material for children to read. Products

are usually displayed in the room as resources.

### **Interactive writing**

Building on Holdaway's (1979) work in shared reading, Moira McKenzie, Warden of the Inner London Education Authority, created an approach that she called *shared writing* (now called *interactive writing*). The process drew from language experience but differed in several important ways. Instead of scribing verbatim exactly what children say, the teacher and children jointly compose a text, often modeling the structure of a piece of literature. For example, after hearing Bill Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* several times, a teacher and a group of children might create a text like: "White dog, white dog, what can you see?" The text is then written word by word, with the teacher demonstrating the process and the children participating in specific aspects of its construction.

1. Shared writing is especially useful in helping beginners make connections between oral and written language.
2. It involves more intensive attention to hearing the sounds in words and to spelling patterns.
3. It is one of the most powerful elements in the early literacy framework because the teacher is helping children develop the skills they need to become more proficient writers within a meaningful context.

Gradually, the teachers in the study groups we worked with began to involve children more, asking them to come up to the easel and fill in a letter or known word. Accordingly, they renamed the process *interactive writing* to denote the shared-pen characteristic.

First, the teacher and students work together to discover a reason for writing. Once the purpose is established, the teacher helps students gain control over the conventions of print that writers need in order to be able

to communicate their messages in written language.

Sharing the pen begins in kindergarten with children filling in just a few letters, perhaps those that can be linked with the names of members of the class. They may also supply a few known words (*the* or *is*, for example). The technique gives teachers a chance to demonstrate saying words slowly and connecting the sounds that are embedded in words to the letters and clusters of letters that represent them.

Interactive writing provides an authentic setting within which the teacher can explicitly demonstrate how written language works. In kindergarten and first grade this approach eases the transition to literacy by engaging children in:

- Cooperatively composing and negotiating a text.
- Using literature as a basis for writing.
- Constructing words through connecting letters (and clusters of letters) and sounds.
- Learning how written language works.
- Connecting writing and reading.
- Producing a text that will serve as a continuing resource for reading and writing, particularly when children are working independently.

The subject of interactive writing may be anything—recounting a group experience; recording ideas from or about individuals; writing lists, letters, or messages; retelling stories; labeling; writing recipes; expanding on or developing a piece of literature; or creating a group story. The writing is based on the children's experiences, interests, strengths, and needs.

As children grow more knowledgeable about writing, teachers make different decisions about sharing the pen. For example, children who know the alphabet letters and many sounds will not need to link letters to their names but will be exploring more com-

plex notions about the ways words work. There will be many words that all children know how to write quickly and automatically, so teachers will not take the time to share the pen in those instances but will write for the children. It is the teacher's responsibility to draw children's attention to elements of written language that challenge children and offer the examples that promote new learning.

There is no one way to conduct interactive writing, but the following procedures have proved effective with beginning writers:

1. The teacher and children negotiate a text, which the teacher helps the children remember as the writing proceeds. In the early stages of interactive writing, the negotiated message is repeated several times by the group. Additionally, it is reread from the beginning each time a new word is completed.
2. The teacher and children share the pen at various points in the writing. The message is written word by word, as the children reread up to the word for each new word attempted. Sometimes the teacher writes the word; often, different children contribute a letter, several letters, or a whole word.
3. Where appropriate, the teacher invites the children to say the word slowly (emphasizing but not segmenting sounds), predicting the letter by analyzing sounds. Children may come up with any letter in any order; the teacher fills in the rest.
4. Some words are known words that are written in quickly. Others are almost under control for most of the children in the class and can be called attention to as a "word we almost know." Still others can be analyzed later to help children learn how words work. Different kinds of words can be placed on a "word wall" to be used as a resource for further learning.
5. As the teacher and children write the message, the teacher may help children

attend to important concepts about print such as spaces, punctuation, capitalization, or the features of a type of writing, such as a list or set of directions.

An important part of interactive writing is the way it makes visible to children how written language works. A neat, totally accurate product is not the goal, although the writing should be very readable, since it will be the basis of future shared or independent reading.

An interactive writing session will typically last from five to thirty minutes depending on the age, experience, and interests of the children involved as well as the purpose and topic.

Interactive writing can demonstrate the value of a continuing piece of work. Producing a piece of interactive writing may take days or even weeks. Conceptualizing, talking, and planning are part of the process. Not only do children like doing it over time, but they experience coming back to a project day after day, thinking about where they left off and where they will resume. An example is Ida Patacca's story map and retelling of the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. Ida read the Galdone version of the story many times to the children and they enjoyed joining in. Most children could approximate the text while "reading" it alone.

When they decided to make their wall mural, they first used interactive writing to list things they wanted to make and place on the map. Then, sentence by sentence, they created a text. Each word was written on individual cards and placed across the bottom of the mural to form a story of about ten lines, which would be read again and again as children chose to "read around the room." All children in the class could read the story, which had been reread many times during its construction, and they often used it as a resource for their own writing. The whole process took about three weeks and was the inspiration for other writing such as the

book about real pigs previously mentioned. At the end, children had a beautiful and constantly useful product of which they could feel proud.

The important thing, however, is the process. Many decisions are involved, and persistence and thought are required. Here is a timetable for a piece of interactive writing based on literature that might be used in kindergarten or first grade (other kinds of interactive writing may take much less time and follow different schedules):

■ *Days 1–4.* Read the selected piece of literature aloud each day.

■ *Day 5.* Read the selected text again. Negotiate the type of writing to be created (retell the story, create an alternative text, make a story map, etc.).

■ *Day 6.* Read the selected text again. Make a list related to the writing to be done.

■ *Day 7.* Read the text again. Write the first sentence on chart paper. Read the sentence together.

■ *Days 8–9.* Read a new story that is related to the interactive writing. Review the sentence written yesterday, and write several more sentences. Read together all sentences.

■ *Day 10.* Read a new story that is related to the interactive writing. Read together all sentences. Plan and begin art work.

■ *Days 11 & 12.* Read a new story. Complete art work and place in book (or on wall mural, etc.).

■ *Days 13 & 14.* Read a new story and begin to think about other kinds of interactive writing. Read together the previous book or wall mural created through interactive writing. Add details (such as labels or speech bubbles created by individual children). Read a "take home" book if the teacher has created one based on the interactive writing.

■ *Days 15 & 16.* Reread a selected story and begin to work on a new piece of interactive writing. Read together the previously completed piece of interactive writing. Encourage children to do independent writing based on the completed piece of interactive writing.

Interactive writing is a setting in which children become apprentices working alongside the more expert writer, the teacher. Everyone in the group gets a chance to contribute something, and everyone can see how it all fits together. Oral language is the foundation of the process. Children can participate in the complicated task of considering a range of language and ideas and shaping them into a piece of language that can be easily represented in written form.

It is very powerful for beginners to be able to put together skills to express a message. Even children who can read and write very little independently have a chance to participate in the process of making a book or other piece of functional writing. They can be authors and illustrators right away. By demonstrating and inviting children to participate, the teacher makes explicit the conventions of print—spacing, punctuation, organization of the page, beginning on the left.

Children can more easily see the purpose of these conventions because they are using them to produce their own text. Children begin to sense the relationships between the type of text being created and the form the writer selects. Often, the interactive writing is linked to other texts, giving children a chance to make meaningful connections between their own writing and other pieces of written language they have heard read or have produced themselves. Finally, interactive writing gives children a chance to create decontextualized language. The language they produce can be read and understood by others or, later, by themselves. They are assuming power over written language.

As children develop sophistication,

interactive writing can still be used to illustrate more complex skills such as paragraphing. More accomplished writers explore different ways of structuring text for various genres. Teachers can illustrate the use of word analysis and teach spelling or complex forms of punctuation. Interactive writing can lead to group authorship. Group research projects, stories, and plays require interaction and cooperation.

### ***Guided writing or writing workshop***

Guided writing or writing workshop—Giacobbe 1981, Graves 1983, Atwell 1987—is another way for teachers to help children learn to write, but in this case the children are constructing their individual pieces of writing with teacher (and eventually peer) guidance, assistance, and feedback. The teacher may have individual conferences with children or call them together first for a minilesson on an aspect of writing from topic selection to composition to punctuation to letter formation.

To participate effectively in writers workshop, students need a simple, predictable structure that frees them to concentrate on their writing.

*Minilessons (5–10 minutes).* With students gathered on the carpet or in a circle of chairs, the teacher provides a short, focused lesson that provides assistance to the writers. These topics almost always emerge from what the teacher notices the students need to learn from observing their writing, conferring with them, and reviewing their writing folders. Topics for minilessons may be selected because they are fine examples of something writers do that will enable the students to develop their craft. When the minilesson is about something all writers need to do that day, the teacher may remind the students to attend to that particular topic in their own work. Mary Ellen Giacobbe, an expert in writing development, has categorized minilessons as *procedural*, *strategy/skill*, or *craft*.

A procedural lesson is a brief instruction on routines or materials that will enable

writers to carry on independently. These minilessons are important early in the year because they show students how to manage their writing time. They might include such topics as organizing and using the writing folder, choosing paper and a cover, using the stapler, or conferring with a partner.

Strategy/skill lessons address the skills of a writer. These include saying words slowly and recording their sounds, leaving space between words, learning about word construction, and using capital letters for names or at the beginning of a sentence.

Craft lessons address what writers and illustrators do to communicate their message to readers. They include instruction on such topics as eliminating unnecessary information, adding information, providing detail, choosing a title, writing a good lead or ending, providing illustrations that enhance the story, and writing in a particular genre.

*Writing and conferring time (20–30 minutes).* During this time, all students are writing. One student may be composing, another revising by rereading and crossing out unnecessary information, another proofreading for spelling errors in a completed draft, another copying a story to make a published book. While students write, the teacher circulates, interacting with them in brief conferences or conversations that enable the writer to move the writing forward. For example, the teacher may first ask the student to read the piece, then tell the student what she understood or ask a question or two about something she didn't understand. Or the teacher may show a child how to say words slowly, write a simple frequently used word, or leave spaces between words. For a child who had trouble getting something down on paper, the teacher may simply listen to the child read what he has written. The teacher's focus is developing the writer, not simply improving the piece the child is writing.

*Sharing session (10–15 minutes).* The class gathers on the carpet or sits in a circle of chairs to share and support work in progress

or to hear a writer read a finished piece. The teacher selects students to come to the author's chair, offering yet another opportunity for students to get response to their writing and to observe how to confer with peers. When a finished piece is being shared, no further suggestions are given, for the purpose is a celebration of the author's finished work.

The goal of writing workshop is continuous growth in the writers as they learn more about the writing process. They experiment with different styles, with editing and revising, with constructing both stories and informational pieces. They receive editorial feedback and guidance from the teacher and eventually from their peers. Teacher demonstration and articulation of the process of reading and writing is critical to children's understanding.

### ***Independent writing***

Independent writing is generated by the child and requires very little teacher support. Children have resources in the classroom, and they know how to use them. The walls are filled with writing that the children have produced and know how to read; pieces of art are annotated, and there are charts with familiar poems and songs. Particular words can be found in these known pieces. There are dictionaries, both personal and commercial. Younger children find the "word wall" particularly helpful. This wall is constantly being constructed and reconstructed by the group. Generally, it contains very useful words that children need to use in writing and also words that they have found to be alike in various ways (words that begin alike or have similar endings, for example).

Ideas for independent writing come out of the group sessions. Independent writing gives children an opportunity to write in various genres for various purposes across the curriculum: survey questions; letters to a friend; stories; informational pieces. Children may also have personal journals in which they write regularly. The literacy framework ensures that the teacher is con-



stantly aware of the need for variety. Another way the teacher uses the framework is to help children see the relationship between what they are learning in interactive writing and how they encode messages in independent writing. Teachers show children how they can use their new learning independently and then observe to see whether the transfer takes place. Observing independent writing helps the teacher plan for guided writing minilessons and suggests teaching points to raise during interactive writing.

### **Classroom Snapshot:** **Use of the Literacy Framework** **in Kindergarten**

Kyeara is a typical kindergarten student in a culturally diverse urban school where 95 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Ida Patacca is the teacher and for several years she has utilized the literacy framework to conceptualize her teaching. The children in Ida's classroom spend their year together immersed in books and stories, first-hand experiences, and language. Every day they learn about how reading and writing works. By the time they leave this classroom, they are literate; they can read simple texts and write their own messages and stories.

Throughout their learning day, the children will engage in activities carefully designed and offered by their teacher to help them build and use their individual knowledge and strengths. Enabling children to use what they know to get to what they do not yet know is a basic principle of this education.

It is January in this kindergarten classroom. In the morning, children come in and begin their "reading time." Although a few students have chosen other projects, most are using the extensive classroom library. Kyeara and two of her friends, Sierra and Lindsay, read *The Three Little Pigs* together, laughing at the funny parts, knocking on the floor to represent the wolf, and saying to-

gether in fierce voices, "Little Pig, little pig, let me come in!" This could be called a "reenactment," for they are not matching print. However, their language is very close to the text. They have an internal sense of the syntax, the meaning, and the way the text is put together.

After the children spend some time in independent reading, Ida calls everyone together and selects a book to read aloud. While Ida reads *The Three Little Pigs*, she holds the book at the eye level of the children, who are seated close. As they listen, the children also discuss the story, making connections to other books and real life experiences. Without losing the momentum of the story, Ida judiciously pauses to give attention to children's observations and questions. Because this is the fifth time they have heard *The Three Little Pigs* read aloud, the children know the story so well they are able to ask in-depth questions. For example, one child points out the pig's *snout* and the concept—different kinds of *noses*—is discussed. This kind of attention to vocabulary would not be possible during the first reading.

### **Interactive writing**

Often, children's literature is used as a base for interactive writing. Today, the children have decided that they want to retell *The Three Little Pigs* on a story map. After Ida suggests that they might want to make a list of what they will need to illustrate their map, the group agrees and children begin to suggest ideas. Kyeara says that they will need three houses, one of sticks.

This is one of the times when Ida helps children attend to the conventions of print. She asks the group to say the words slowly as they write them down. She finds this to be an extremely effective way of teaching sound/symbol relationships. By this time of the year, children are able to hear and record many sounds in words. They know that *pigs* begins with the letter *P* and ends with *S*. Figure 3-6 shows Kyeara reading the story map of *The Three Little Pigs*. Because she has had

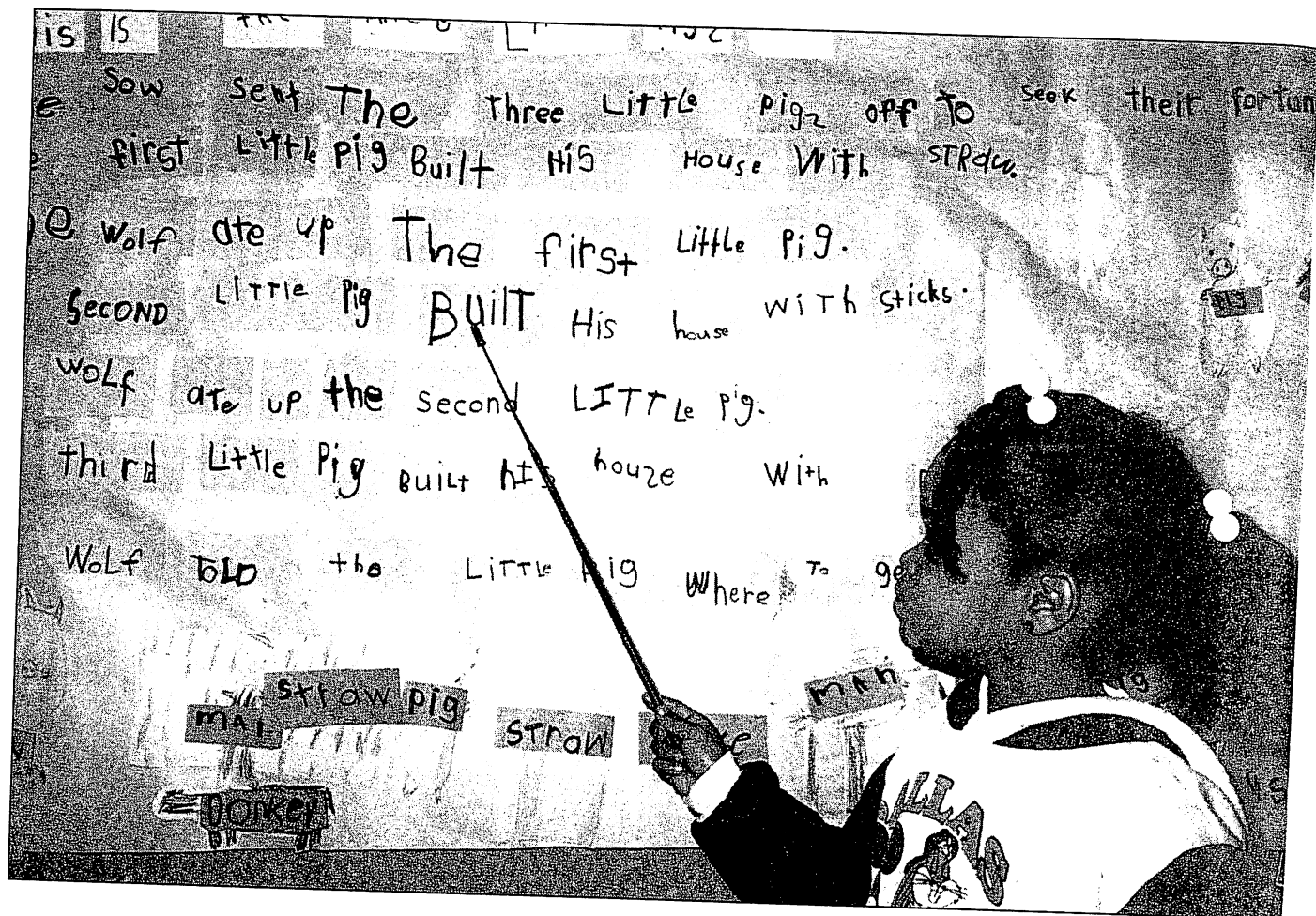


FIGURE 3-6 Kyearea reading a story map

many experiences reading the first part of the map, she can read the story independently with ease.

At the beginning of the year, when children know less about sound/symbol relationships, one way that Ida helps them develop these relationships is by using a chart with everyone's name on it. She then links unknown words to known words—the names of students in the class. For example, had they been writing this list in the early part of the year, she would have linked the *P* in *pigs* to the *P* in *Patacca* saying, “Pigs, Patacca. Pigs starts just like Patacca, with a *P*.” Now, later in the school year, the children don’t need to refer to the chart for initial or final sounds, but they still notice things about their first and last names when analyzing more difficult parts of words. The

powerful demonstrations in interactive writing help children begin to write on their own.

### Journal writing

Some mornings, Ida models the process of beginning a journal entry for her kindergarten students. She talks about and shows the supplies she needs. Then she says that first, she has to think of something to write: “If you are real quiet for a minute, I’ll think of something I want to write.” As the students look on, she demonstrates composing a sentence and beginning to write. She emphasizes thinking about the first word and saying the sentence out loud so that she can remember it.

Then, students begin to write for themselves. When Kyearea and her friends are writ-

ing in their journals, they can choose their own topics. Their teacher observes them closely to see who needs extra help. They write about what is happening in their daily lives and topics that are being studied in the classroom. Kyeera writes *I Like The house. I Like Miy MoM*. She draws a beautiful picture of her house, a rainbow, and the sun, which she labels *snū*. She reads it to Ida, who notices how she is saying the words slowly, really thinking about the sounds in *my*. Then, Ida works with her to say *sun* again and think about the last sound. Kyeera is well able to analyze words for the final consonant sound. She says words slowly, linking sounds and letters.

### Moving to guided reading

On other mornings, Ida and her class read a few favorite poems that are printed on large chart paper. These poems are laminated for durability, and children often return to them during their independent reading time. After reading one particular poem, Kyeera locates the word *the*. Then Ida reads the big book *I Went Walking*. She has chosen this book in order to demonstrate checking the print with the illustration, but the children's attention was also drawn to other things in the text. For example, Kyeera notices that the punctuation was different on these two pages—one had a question mark and one a period. Ida and the children talk about statements and questions.

By January in kindergarten, Ida has begun to gather two or three children together for guided reading lessons. At that time she focuses on the particular instructional needs of that group of children. Today, guided reading for Kyeera is planned for the afternoon when children are working in the various centers in the room.

This classroom snapshot provides one example of literacy learning in a kindergarten in which the goal is providing every child with numerous opportunities organized around a flexible literacy framework.

## Documentation of Progress

Assessment is an integral part of the framework. Chapter 6 outlines a variety of ways to assess and document children's reading behavior. The assessment system, however, encompasses the range of achievement across the curriculum. Teachers gather data that (1) track the progress of individual children and (2) assess the impact of instruction on the group. Marie Clay's *Observation Survey* (1993a) includes informative measurement instruments that when administered to individuals at systematically spaced intervals provide patterns of progress and also guide instruction. Running records are a powerful tool not only for assessing reading levels and matching children with texts but for analyzing reading behaviors for evidence of the development of independent reading strategies.

## Home and Family Involvement

Home and family involvement enhances the work in the classroom and helps children use their literacy learning in different contexts. Teachers have found many ways to involve parents and family members in the life of the school, from visiting their homes to having parents work in the classroom to conducting workshops on children's learning. Three ideas that teachers in the literacy project have found helpful are described below.

### Writing briefcase

The writing briefcase is a plastic carrying case that contains all kinds of writing materials—tablets, markers, pencils, crayons, loose paper, stapled books, note pads, envelopes, Post-its, scissors, etc. Many of these materials can be acquired free or at low cost. Children rotate taking the briefcase home, each time sharing what they produced at home when they bring the briefcase back to school the next day. Often, parents and siblings write notes or draw pictures for children to share. The briefcase has several positive outcomes. First, it helps children

take their literacy learning into their homes and be recognized for their growing competence. Second, it helps parents give their children more opportunities to write and may suggest uses for printed material that might otherwise be thrown away. Finally, it communicates the value of writing to children and their families.

### **Keep Books**

Inexpensive take-home books offer a way to expand children's opportunities to read at home. Teachers in the literacy project make sure that children have the chance to borrow books from the school—those for parents to read to them and those they can read themselves. It is widely known that school efforts are greatly enhanced when children have books in their homes. But because books are expensive and many parents don't know how to select and use them, it's difficult for many parents to provide home literacy. Children in lower economic areas, in particular, are at a disadvantage.

The Ohio State University staff has designed a home book program that simultaneously addresses the need for more books and creates positive communication with parents. These books do not take the place of the children's literature in the library, but they are an inexpensive way to increase the reading children do at home.

Keep Books are simple texts (although they will increase in complexity during first grade), inexpensively published, that sometimes have an interactive element. The books are simple, with black-and-white line drawings. Directions to children (and the front cover design) indicate that this is a different kind of book, one in which drawings can be colored with markers or crayons and in which their names (and sometimes some text) can be written. These books, in general, are intended to be read and reread by the children, although they are equally suitable for reading aloud by parents and siblings. Children are encouraged to put their names in these books and to keep them as a

collection. They fit in a shoe box, and teachers ask parents to make sure each child has a special place to keep her box of books.

The Keep Book program encompasses a wide range of books, including Spanish texts and books based on mathematical concepts, and a review process has been established to assess books for their text quality and potential for supporting beginning reading strategies. There is an accompanying teacher's guide provided with each book order and a videotape that may be ordered separately from Ohio State University. The guide provides step-by-step help for teachers in introducing and maintaining the program. Sample letters to parents are included, as well as a survey to assess the impact of books on the home. The videotape explains the purpose of Keep Books and shows their introduction and use; it is designed to be used at parent workshops. An initial order form is included in Appendix A. Additional order forms will be available as more books are developed.

Eventually we envisioned the collection including fifty preschool books, one hundred kindergarten books, and one hundred first-grade books. (Obviously, these can be used flexibly to fit different reading levels.) Presently, the books are available for \$.25 per book. Thus, in the first three years of school a young child could conceivably read and own 250 books for an average per-year cost of about \$20.00, just about the least expensive educational innovation we can think of.

### **Bookmaking workshops**

Bookmaking workshops for parents are successful and popular. After only a few demonstrations, parents can easily write books for or with their children using plain sheets of paper and pictures from the Sunday paper or mail-order catalogs. These homemade books increase the variety of reading material for young children and create shared literacy for caregivers and children. They can be kept in the shoe box along with the Keep Books.